NEGOTIATING
YOUR NEEDS IN THE WORKPLACE

Cedric’s Story
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**Negotiating Your Needs in the Workplace**

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most difficult tasks in the workplace can be negotiating one’s own needs with those of our supervisors and our colleagues. In general, our family and society at large do not equip us with the skills to negotiate successfully for the things that we want. Therefore, we often find ourselves frustrated in our attempts and avoid of the process altogether.

In today’s work environment, however, negotiation skills are essential. We regularly find ourselves interacting with people whose norms, priorities and/or sensibilities are different from our own. These differences can stem from culture, gender, age, religious values, ethnicity, and positions of authority, among other factors. However, those categories only form the lens through which we see ourselves and one another (Avruch, 1998). Ultimately, regardless of the category with which we identify, having our needs acknowledged and respected is important to all of us. Negotiating effectively depends upon our ability to clearly and appropriately express our needs and likewise, to understand the needs of others.

This booklet serves as a guide for planning how to enter into the sometimes difficult conversations required to address and resolve tensions and concerns in the workplace. It traces the experience of Cedric, a staff member who is struggling with how to have a difficult conversation with his supervisor about his work-life balance. Readers accompany Cedric through nine consultative sessions with his mentor/conflict coach, Marie, moving through the steps of preparing for a collaborative negotiation. Each session builds on the previous one and provides the reader with a conceptual understanding of negotiation, as well as an appreciation of the emotional experience that it may entail. While learning from Cedric’s process, readers are encouraged to take the opportunity to reflect on their own situations and prepare for similar conversations through exercises designed to raise awareness and develop basic negotiation skills.

While collaborative negotiation is an ability that takes time and practice to master, we hope that Cedric’s Story can be help you start and/or further your learning process in a meaningful way.
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR USE

This booklet has been developed for use in a variety of formats: 1) self-study, 2) small group study, and 3) intensive study. Below are a few recommendations for each that will help optimize the learning process:

For self-study:
1. We recommend completing only one, maximum two sections per sitting, as the learning process benefits from a careful reading of the dialogue between Cedric and Marie and thoughtful consideration of the exercises.
2. For sections that involve role-playing exercises, we recommend enlisting a colleague to support and provide feedback.

For small group study:
1. The study of this booklet is greatly enhanced by the discussion, experimentation and feedback that a small group (2-12 participants) facilitates.
2. While we recommend that groups meet regularly, each group should consult at the outset and decide on how they would like to work together. Some questions to address may be:
   • How frequently should we meet? (We suggest a total 4-6 meetings.)
   • How long should each meeting last? (We would advise between 60 – 90 minutes.)
   • Does everyone agree to an element of self-study? If preferred to read and complete each section as a group more time than what is recommended above would be needed together in the group. (It is important that each participant will be responsible for reading and completing the exercises in each section.)
   • How will we manage confidentiality within the group?
   • Do we advance in the study if members of the group are absent?
3. It may be helpful to invite a Peer Support Volunteer to join and/or help facilitate the group study, as they are trained in some of the basic skills of the booklet. For more information on facilitating study circles, see The Facilitator Guide .

For intensive study:
1. If studied intensively (i.e. retreats or training), we recommend enlisting the support of a skilled facilitator with experience in the subject and familiarity with the material.
2. We recommend to dedicate one and a half to two full days for this training/retreat.
3. In the case of large groups, we recommend dividing them into smaller groups of 3-4 participants. The facilitator can circulate as needed.
4. As intensive study tends to impose a faster pace, we recommend that facilitators reconvene the large group periodically to reflect on key concepts and debrief the role-playing exercises.

A Facilitator Guide of this booklet as well as some other material is available on the Staff Well-Being intranet site, visit https://intranet.unicef.org/dhr/dhrsites.nsf/Site%20Pages/Page0304
It takes courage to face difficult situations head-on.

Session 1: Cedric’s Story

[Cedric is meeting Marie for the first of several conflict coaching sessions. Marie is a former UNICEF colleague who has started her own conflict management consultancy. She has agreed to mentor Cedric as he prepares for a difficult conversation with his supervisor. The rest of the booklet will follow the dialogue between Cedric and Marie. You are invited to engage in the exercises along with Cedric in spaces provided.]

Marie: Cedric, it’s great to see you! I have such fond memories of the time we worked together and I was happy that you reached out to me for support in this process. From the little you’ve shared with me so far, it’s clear that your current situation has been very difficult for you and I want to applaud the courage it takes to face it head-on.

Cedric: Thank you, Marie. You’re right, it has been difficult and I’ve struggled to know how to approach the situation. I know I’m not the only one who feels uncomfortable at work, but it’s not really something we’re accustomed to discussing openly, much less with a supervisor. I really appreciate the help.

Marie: It’s my pleasure. OK, tell me more about the situation you’re struggling with and let’s see how I can help you work through it.

Cedric: Right. As I mentioned, our Country Office recently dealt with a flooding emergency which, as you know, lasted until only a few months ago. We were all extremely busy and overworked responding to the crisis. The Chief of Education had to leave at the height of the crisis, and a temporary replacement was appointed in his place. That meant that I had a lot more responsibility, because the replacement was new to the country and had to learn many things. When the emergency situation was finally under control, our work slowed down somewhat and things started to go back to normal.

Marie: So what happened after that?

Cedric: Well, we now have a new chief and he has big ambitions for our team. He is extremely driven and wants to prove himself in his first chief post. He came in as the crisis situation was winding down, but we were all still working a lot of extra hours. The problem is that months later we’re still working as if we’re in a state of emergency. I feel like my supervisor is completely oblivious to how exhausted we all are. He seems to expect me to be available all the time, even after work hours. This has been really upsetting for me, but also for my family. I barely see them during the week, and the situation has started to cause tensions at home.

Marie: So although the emergency has been resolved, you’re still feeling overworked, mainly due to what you feel are your new chief’s ambitious plans. This has caused tensions at home because you’re not as available for your family as you should be. How has the situation affected you?
C: Well, I’ve always been a hard worker, and I like to do my job with excellence, but I’ve been feeling unmotivated, distracted and irritable lately. I’m tired a lot. I feel like our office didn’t have a chance to recover from the intense period we had during the flood and already all these new demands are placed on us.

M: So you’re feeling irritable, distracted, unmotivated and tired, and though you haven’t said it quite this way, it sounds like you feel that the demands placed on you are not reasonable, at least not so soon after the recent emergency when you had to work so hard. What needs does this situation create for you? What would you like to be different?

C: As you know, we work hard all the time, and I understand having ambitious goals in a new job, because I’ve been in that situation as well. But this chief needs to understand that we need a rest, that I need a rest! I wish that he would make fewer demands, and let us maintain a normal workload and schedule. Maybe he doesn’t understand what “normal” is to us, because he came right at the end of the crisis, when we were all still working at a frantic pace. He’s also here without his family, so he has more time to spend at work. As much as I care about my work, my family is my highest priority. I have put work before my wife and children before and I promised myself that I wouldn’t do that again.

M: I want to make sure I’m hearing you fully and clearly. You’re saying that you understand the value of working hard, and you understand the motivation to be ambitious in a new job, but you need time to recover. You want your supervisor to understand that the hours you were working during the emergency are not “normal” hours for your office. You would like fewer demands placed on you so that you can go back to your normal schedule and recover from the intense work you did during the crisis. You’re saying that without his family here, he has time to dedicate to work that you and other colleagues do not. Most importantly, you want to honor your commitment to put your family first.

C: Exactly. It’s helpful to hear it reflected back to me in this way.

M: So, what is getting in the way of you communicating these needs of yours to the chief...by the way, what is his name?

C: [Cedric laughs]. His name is Henry. It’s just not easy! He’s my supervisor after all, and I want to make a good impression on him. I want him to know that I’m reliable and very competent at what I do. I’ve been in the Country Office for fifteen years. We don’t get many opportunities for advancement around here, so I don’t want to ruin things with him by complaining about the number of hours and tasks I have and not performing at a high level. At the same time, I’m getting more and more resentful about the situation and it’s affecting the quality of my performance.

M: It sounds like you’re torn between wanting to prove yourself to Henry and questioning and resenting what he’s asking of you. Do you think that responding to these demands is the only way that you could prove yourself to him?

C: I honestly don’t know.

M: How do you think Henry would respond to you if you approached him now and told him exactly what you’ve been struggling with?

C: I think he would listen, but I’m pretty sure he would take it as a complaint and think less of me. I can also see him getting really defensive about the situation.

M: I hear what you’re saying...now, what are the consequences of not saying anything to Henry? What would happen then?

C: That’s a good point...If I don’t say anything, I will probably continue feeling more resentful and my work will suffer more than it already has. I won’t be a very pleasant person to be around, that’s for sure. My mood has already become more negative. Believe me, Marie, I want to have this conversation, but it feels risky.

M: I do hear your concerns, Cedric. I’ve had similar concerns in certain situations. However, I’d like you to consider that Henry can never be supportive of your needs if he does not know what effect his demands are having on you. Moreover, by bringing the issue to his attention, you will have an opportunity to hear what his concerns and needs are, and how you can be supportive of those as well.

C: That’s true...but what if he doesn’t agree and responds by telling me that the amount of hours I’m working is simply what he expects from any staff member in my position? What if it just creates conflict?

M: This is only our first session, Cedric. We’re just getting started. By the end of our work together, I assure you, you will feel much more equipped to deal with the challenges of the process. Regardless of how receptive or un receptive he is at the outset, your approach can be a powerful incentive for him to respond positively. I’m not asking you to not have concerns. I’m just inviting you to suspend them for the time being.

C: [Cedric sighs and smiles] Where do we start?

M: I like that attitude! I would say that the first place to look when preparing for a negotiation is within ourselves. Negotiating effectively is about much more than just following a series of steps or applying a set of tools. It requires a certain awareness and understanding of oneself and of the other person. The greater our awareness and understanding of the situation, the more skillfully we’re able to use the tools we have.
Session 1  Cedric’s Story

We’ve discussed briefly the reasons why this situation feels so difficult for you. You’re very upset with the way things are, and at the same time, you’re afraid that having this conversation with Henry will just make matters worse and create conflict between you. My sense is that this fear has been one of the biggest, if not the biggest obstacle preventing you from discussing your needs.

C: You’re probably right.

[Mari then takes out a piece of paper, writes the word “Conflict” in the middle, and then passes it to Cedric.]

M: Cedric, I’d like you to think of what you associate with the word “Conflict”, anything that comes to mind at all, and write them down on this sheet of paper.

Join Cedric in this exercise and complete the question below.
What do you notice about the words you’ve written?

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

M: Seeing associations like “anger,” “fear,” “threat,” “confrontation,” “violence,” and “disagreement” surrounding one’s notion of conflict is a useful visualization of why many of us are so distressed by conflict or even the possibility of it. These associations have a powerful influence on how we approach conflict.

How do you think these negative associations affect your reaction to conflict? Do you notice any patterns in the way you react?
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

M: One way conflict is defined is “a clash or incompatibility between different opinions, values or needs.” We tend to be very quick to label differences as “incompatible,” particularly when it comes to differences in values and needs. The climate this creates in the workplace is one in which people avoid talking about needs and values altogether in order to avoid conflict. It’s also one that makes the process of negotiation seem all the more intimidating and even futile.

How would you describe the climate in your workplace? What happens when differences arise that seem “incompatible?”
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

M: However, conflict is also defined as an opportunity for growth. In fact, some say that it’s a necessary and unavoidable condition for growth, that without that clash of differing opinions, we never get the spark of new and deeper understanding.

If this were one’s mindset entering a negotiation, what might be possible?
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
M: There is a saying that is very appropriate: “If all you have is a hammer, everything begins to look like a nail.” A hammer can be useful in some instances and destructive in others. Many of us have developed unconscious habits to handle stressful situations. Some people, for example, always react defensively or aggressively, while others react by withdrawing and trying to avoid the situation altogether. Our negative associations with conflict are not bad, Cedric. But if that is the only perspective we can draw from, it’s likely we are missing opportunities for growth and added value that may be available to us. Does that make sense?

C: It’s extremely helpful. It’s challenging, most, if not all of my ideas about conflict, ideas I’ve had as long as I can remember...

M: I’m glad you’re finding this valuable, Cedric. I had a very similar response to my first conflict resolution training. This type of self-examination is rarely comfortable, but it can also be very rewarding...does this feel like a good stopping point for today?

C: Yes, my head is full already!

STUDY GUIDE 1: Cedric’s Story

**RECAP**

- Our fear of conflict and our negative associations with it can sabotage our attempts to negotiate effectively with colleagues and supervisors.

Identifying our own negative preconceptions about conflict can help us manage negative reactions in ourselves and in others. Conflict is normal and inevitable, but how we approach it is what will make the difference in how positive or negative it’s impact is.

**Review exercises as a group.**

**For further reflection and discussion:**


2. What gets in the way of communicating your needs in the workplace? What assumptions do you have about what would happen if you did?

3. What are you noticing about Marie’s approach to her conversation with Cedric? What value do you see in this approach?

4. To what extent have you experienced conflict as an opportunity for growth? Share an example with the group.

5. What’s your “hammer” when it comes to conflict? What is your default response?
SESSION 2: Our Approaches to Conflict

M: How are you feeling today? Our first session was quite intense.

C: It was intense. I’m still processing some of the things we discussed but I’m eager to continue. I’ve spent so much time thinking about this situation so talking about it with another person is refreshing and it’s helping me clarify my thoughts.

M: I’m very glad to hear that, Cedric. Today, I’d like for us to explore our approaches to conflict a bit further. Let’s look at this table:

Finding common ground may seem unlikely, but if we dig deeply enough, we usually find it.
C: Absolutely. This is how I am when I’m driving around downtown at rush hour.

M: Exactly. Many of us have to drive that way in this city!

How and when might a competitive style be useful? How and when might it be a problem? What type of climate does it create? How does it feel to use it? How does it feel when another person uses it and you are on the receiving end of their competitiveness?

M: The next style is Accommodation. In contrast to the competitive style, when someone adopts an accommodating style of conflict resolution he or she demonstrates high concern for others while having a low concern for him or herself. The main concern of this style is eliminating any possible conflict and preserving the relationship. Someone with this style would achieve this by actively seeking to meet the needs of the other party, even at the expense of their own needs. They would be very compliant. The outcome of an accommodating style is referred to as a lose/win.

C: That sounds like me with my supervisor.

M: Yes, perhaps, so you know what some of the positive and negative consequences are of this approach. You are trying to please your supervisor at all costs, even if it means sacrificing other things that are important to your quality of life.

How and when might an accommodating style be useful? How and when might it be a problem? What type of climate does it create? How does it feel to be accommodating and how does it feel when someone else is accommodating towards you?

M: Now we come to Avoidance. A person who adopts an avoidant style demonstrates low concern for others and for self. This style attempts to resolve conflict by creating distance from it and not engaging in it. The outcome of an avoidant style is referred to as a lose/lose, as the needs of neither party are ultimately met.

C: Now this is definitely me! My initial response is to just avoid the entire situation and hope it resolves itself with time, even though it has shown no signs of improving. I guess there’s a lot of value lost for both of us as a result.

M: So this is making sense to you. You see how styles can also shift depending on the person and even with the same person, they can shift over time.

How might an avoidant style be useful? How might it be a liability? What type of climate does it create? How does it feel to avoid, and how does it feel to interact with someone who has an avoidant style?

M: Next is Compromise. A person who adopts a compromising style demonstrates a moderate level of concern for self and others. Someone using this style of conflict resolution attempts to find a middle ground. It’s based on the assumption that resolving conflict inevitably requires concessions from both parties. The outcome of a compromising style is referred to as a 50/50, as the needs of both parties are only partially met.

C: That’s usually how I think of conflict resolution. It’s all about give and take. With my wife, we constantly have to compromise when it comes to deciding how to manage our finances, how to raise our children, how we spend our vacation. She likes to go dancing, I like staying at home and watching a movie. Like I said, there’s always a give and take. We rarely get everything we want, but we try to find an arrangement that is at least tolerable for both of us. It hasn’t been easy, but overall it’s worked out well. You’re referring to it as a 50/50, but I’ve always looked at it as a win/win.

M: Great examples! Compromise can without a doubt be useful!

But, how might it be a liability? What type of climate does it create, particularly over time? How does it feel to use it, and how does it feel when someone compromises with you?

M: Last but certainly not least is Collaboration. I’m going to give you a disclaimer first. I like this conflict style a lot, and most of the techniques I’ll be sharing with you are designed to work toward more collaborative style.

C: This must be the win/win one.

M: Correct. A person using the collaborative style represents a high level of concern for self and for others. This style frames conflict resolution as a partnership in exploring how the needs of both parties can be fully met. Sounds good, right?
A collaborative approach to negotiation doesn't view differing needs as mutually exclusive. In fact, collaboration is not possible unless both parties' needs are clearly stated and addressed.

Cedric, can you think of any instances when you have been collaborative with your supervisor?

C: I guess when we agree about tasks that need to get done, it is easy to be collaborative. The real challenge is when we disagree. Ultimately, the decision is his to make, so I usually don't insist on my point of view … I see I have a tendency to accommodate pretty quickly in those instances.

M: Right, that's a good point. As your supervisor, he does have a higher level of authority and autonomy when it comes to certain decisions. However, being aware of the pros and cons of your usual way of responding to disagreements is an opportunity to recognize that you have a choice in your responses. What do you think about that, Cedric?

C: It makes a lot of sense. Accommodating my supervisor when we disagree has become one of those “unconscious, reactive habits” you referred to earlier and it keeps me from seeing other possibilities. Even if we still disagree, I’m pretty sure I’ll feel better about the situation if I make the effort to share my perspective. It’s still difficult though. [Cedric laughs.]

M: [Marie laughs with him.] That's a powerful insight, Cedric. It took me a lot longer to acknowledge similar tendencies in myself. Impressive! We have worked hard today and I'd say we're off to a very good start. To further your reflection, it would be helpful for you to take this table home with you.

[Marie passes Cedric a worksheet.]

M: Sometimes people use the terms “compromise” and “collaboration” interchangeably. I think you understand now that although both approaches acknowledge a need for partnership in the negotiation, the basis of the partnership is different for each. The basis of a compromising style is a willingness to sacrifice certain needs or to fulfill them only partially. This approach often leads to individuals expressing only the needs they think will be met. While this may be better than a win/lose or a lose/lose outcome, value is still lost for both people. The conflict may be “resolved” but there is often a level of dissatisfaction.
### WORKSHEET: THE CLASH OF STYLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>COMPETITION</th>
<th>ACCOMODATION</th>
<th>AVOIDANCE</th>
<th>COMPROMISE</th>
<th>COLLABORATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COMPETITIVE</td>
<td>Both can appreciate one another’s directness, but they may also clash harshly in their positions. My mother and my sister clash a lot, because they are both competitive.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACCOMMODATION</td>
<td>A competitive person would have less overt conflict with an accommodator, but they risk overlooking the accommodator’s needs and input which may create unseen tension. I’ve said I accommodate a lot with my supervisor, but I now have some resentment.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVOIDANCE</td>
<td>Similar to working with an accommodator, a competitive style may not have overt conflict with avoider, but could experience frustration not knowing what is on his/her mind.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMPROMISE</td>
<td>A compromiser would try to work with a competitive person more actively and could appreciate the competitive person’s transparency, but ultimately also feel like he/she is making all the efforts with little reward for him/herself. My wife compromises a lot with her mother.</td>
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<tr>
<td>COLLABORATION</td>
<td>Likewise, a collaborator will have to work hard with a competitive person to also have his/her needs met but may bring a competitive person around to acting more collaboratively through his/her example. My assistant is a great collaborator who brings us all together.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
STUDY GUIDE 2: Our Approaches to Conflict

RECAP

• Knowing our own and others’ dominant approach to conflict – Competition, Accommodation, Avoidance, Compromise and Collaboration – is essential to deciding the best approach to a difficult conversation.

• Finally, no conflict style is inherently better than another. All styles are useful and necessary at different times. If, however, it is possible to exercise collaboration, this approach usually gives the most satisfying results to all involved.

Review exercises as a group.

For further reflection and discussion:

1. Where did your associations with conflict originate from? How/where did you acquire your ideas about conflict?

2. What is your reaction to the distinction between “compromise” and “collaboration”? How often have you used these terms interchangeably and at what cost to your relationships?

3. What do you notice about the “clashes of styles” in your workplace? (Refer to Worksheet: “The Clash of Styles”) Are any more common than others?
SESSION 3: Understanding Positions, Interests, Values and Emotions

M: We’ve discussed how the experience of conflict or tension is not a positive one for most people. You said a lot of things last time about the effect that this situation with your work has had on you. It sounds like you’ve been feeling very tired, less motivated, and not performing at your best. Tell me more about how has this affected your performance.

C: Hmm…lately, I just try to get through the day and leave before Henry has the chance to give me any additional tasks. (Cedric frowns) Needless to say, I haven’t been doing my best work because I feel that the demands on me are simply unrealistic and I simply don’t have the energy. I used to love my work, but my motivation has really suffered. I need to see this change.

M: So, let’s look more closely at your responses to this tense situation. A very typical response is to become entrenched in our positions. A position is the stance we take at the outset of a negotiation; it’s the “what” a person wants. It is often the clashing point in a disagreement. Examples of things we take positions on are: asking for more support, more autonomy or authority, or demanding that another person’s behavior change.

C: Yes, all of those would be nice in this situation!

M: Usually, the more we fear that the other person will push against our position, whatever it is, the more attached we become to it. If you think any of those things you want are in jeopardy of being overlooked, taken away, or trampled on, you will hold on tighter to protect them. It is interesting how we become attached to our positions, fearing that we may lose out on what we need. Are you aware of any other positions you’re holding?

C: Since my job requirements were different during the emergency, sometimes people still expect me to respond to their questions, advocate on their behalf, or provide technical support that is not accounted for in my work plan. I could be more open to having those conversations with them, but I just tell them that’s not my job anymore and refer them to Henry.

M: Yes, that is a position. But let’s look a little deeper again. Why are these positions important to you? If I ask you why it matters to you to be strict about only doing what is in your work plan, what would you say?
C: I won’t be taken advantage of! I worked so hard, we all did, and we deserve time to recover. I expected Henry to be more sensitive to these things and to recognize the sacrifices we’ve made to meet the demands of the work.

M: OK, so what you’ve just identified are your **Interests**. You’re saying that you need your efforts to be acknowledged, and that you need a rest after the difficult period of intense work during the crisis. These are the reasons underlying your position to set limits on the amount of work you do.

What are examples of strong positions you have held to in the past?

Now think of those positions, and ask yourself why they were important to you?

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**M: Interests** are best described as the needs that underlie and motivate our positions. Unmet needs in the workplace can include: respect, professional support, work-life balance, or career growth opportunities. By asking “why” we want any of the positions we want, as you’ve just done, you can focus on what interests to bring up in a negotiation.

C: I see. We get attached to our positions, but you’re right, every position has an underlying need and it’s the need that really matters to me.

**M:** Cedric, what you’re sharing with me also reflects the **values** you hold. Your values point beyond your immediate needs towards what helps you thrive. For example, feeling respected in the workplace may be a very basic need for you, but it seems like you would thrive in a more collaborative environment. I can see that service to others is also a value of yours, as you really go beyond the call of duty to deliver when people are in a difficult place. Spending quality time with your family is also extremely valuable to you. Knowing our own values as well as those of the person with whom we are negotiating can be important clues as to why some things bother us more than others. When we sense others are not respecting our values, we may have strong emotional responses. These responses are actually very helpful clues to clarify what really matters to us.

What are some of the values you hold?

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**Underlying and motivating our positions are needs, interests and values.**

C: I won’t be taken advantage of! I worked so hard, we all did, and we deserve time to recover. I expected Henry to be more sensitive to these things and to recognize the sacrifices we’ve made to meet the demands of the work.

M: Thinking about how we feel when our needs and values are disregarded, takes us into discussing a very important component of negotiations: **emotions**. In the conflict diagram exercise we did earlier, we talked about strong negative emotions that can accompany a conflict. Some examples are anger, disgust, fear, and sadness. Experiencing these emotions in the workplace can be difficult, because it seems like more is at stake if you express them. It’s no wonder the most typical conflict response style at work is avoidance!

C: Yes, my emotions have been pretty strong at work lately, but I’ve been bottling them up. Unfortunately, when I leave I’m still in a bad mood. I don’t like that.

M: How do these emotional responses affect other relationships outside of work?

C: It has affected my family life. I’m more impatient with my children, and I don’t feel like talking with my wife or with anyone. Generally, I just feel like watching television or going to sleep.

M: I see. The tensions at work take away from your ability to be present and supportive for your family and loved ones. You have shared how you value family more than anything, so I can imagine the toll these tensions are taking on you.

C: It’s so true. Allowing all of this to affect them is the worst part of it.

M: I’m sure it is, so we have some very important work to do in this area. Cross-cultural researchers have identified eight emotions that are universally recognized around the world: 1) Anger, 2) Sadness, 3) Fear, 4) Enjoyment, 5) Love, 6) Surprise, 7) Disgust, and 8) Shame.

It’s also possible to group emotions into eight families. Look over this list and see which ones are familiar feelings for you.

M: As I was saying before, expressing negative feelings can feel risky at work, where we are generally encouraged to leave personal feelings at home. The reality, however, is that emotions are a natural part of the human experience, and whether or not we accept them, they significantly impact our perceptions and responses to others.
If it seems like your emotions are overtaking you, however, and making it difficult to see clearly or to feel centered when approaching your supervisor, it may be useful to take some time out to process them before broaching a conversation. Everyone has different needs when it comes to dealing with emotions.

Cedric, when you are experiencing difficult emotions, what type of support do you need from other people?

C: It helps me to just take some time out, or to engage in physical exercise in order to release some of my stress. Really, I don’t like to expose my negative emotions to my family or to other people, so I prefer to just get away, but that’s not always a viable option. Sometimes talking to my wife or friends about what’s bothering me can help. I don’t like to talk to my colleagues, though, because it often becomes a venting or gossip session that adds to the negative atmosphere at office.

M: Well, it sounds like you have a pretty good idea of what things help and what things don’t. Those things can help you feel strong enough to have a difficult conversation.

How can other people support you when you are experiencing strong emotions?

How can you support yourself?

M: You’re doing really good work, Cedric. Now let’s look a little more deeply at managing feelings in tense situations, since we have already determined that leaving them unattended is not productive and can even be harmful.

C: Good idea. My feelings about this have been building, and yet I haven’t expressed them. It just seems a lot easier to avoid the possibility of conflict. I’m afraid of coming across as a complainer, or as someone who is ungrateful for his job, or who feels a sense of entitlement, or who doesn’t want to work hard.

M: The fear of making things worse is one of the key reasons people don’t express their feelings. Also, you don’t want to become vulnerable to being mischaracterized or judged for your feelings. But the fact is that feelings have a habit of manifesting themselves one way or another. Even if you are a talented actor, and you can put on a convincing happy face, the internal chatter of your unspoken feelings will almost certainly interfere with your ability to focus, listen to others and perform well. As you realized in the earlier exercise, there are some feelings that we are more comfortable expressing than others. This varies from person to person depending on their upbringing or their personality. Often, when we are not
comfortable expressing feelings, we will mask them under other more acceptable feelings. For example, I am not comfortable expressing anger, so I may turn it into sadness which is more acceptable for me to feel. I might judge and blame myself if I feel anger, but not for feeling sad.

**C:** That sounds surprisingly familiar.

**M:** [Marie laughs] I’m glad I’m not the only one! Something else we do when we’re uncomfortable with our feelings, or when we simply haven’t become conscious of our feelings, is to translate them into things that are not feelings at all. The book, Difficult Conversations, includes useful insight for identifying when we are translating our feelings into other things that seem easier to express. Take a look at this:

We Translate Our Feelings Into

Judgments
“If you were a good friend you would have been there for me.”

Attributions
“Why were you trying to hurt me?”

Characterizations
“You’re just so inconsiderate.”

Problem-solving
“The answer is for you to call me more often”

**M:** Cedric, in your internal monologue about Henry’s actions, have any of these things come up?

**C:** I characterize Henry as being inconsiderate and disrespectful. I think I also use attributions. Inside, I’m thinking, “How could he not realize how overworked we all are? Is he blind?” Sometimes I also think, “It’s easy for him to do all this work, because he’s new and has no other life here besides his work. He also has all this new energy that we don’t have, since he didn’t go through the flooding crisis in the same way the rest of us did.” I guess I also judge his skill as a supervisor because he’s not paying enough attention to his staff’s needs. And yes, even problem-solving comes up. I think of what he should be doing differently and have the urge to tell him, “You need to postpone new projects for another month at least!”

**M:** These thoughts have been running through your head, though you haven’t expressed them. Sometimes, people think “managing” their feelings means controlling them by force. What happens when you control your feelings in this way? Do your feelings go away?

**C:** No, I’ve been keeping my feelings hidden, but in fact, they are growing, not going away.

**M:** Yes, and the more your feelings intensify, the more they will “leak” out in other ways, or – in a worst case scenario – they will explode out of you. Actually, one of the most effective ways to “control” our feelings is to express them. But how can we express them in a constructive way? The key is to learn to say what you’re feeling without the translations we mentioned earlier, and especially without blaming. The easiest way to get at a pure expression of a feeling without turning it into anything else, is simply to say “I feel ________.” Remember to connect it to the reason, but without assigning blame. So, instead of saying “I feel tired because you have no consideration for your staff,” you would say...

**C:** “I feel tired, because I haven’t had a chance to recover from the intense work during the flood.”

**M:** Well done. That removes the blame, but still connects your feeling to a reason that can be understood.

**C:** OK, I understand that part, Marie. But what if your feelings are so strong you really can’t think clearly? I’m not saying that will happen in my case, but I worry that when I start to talk about them, I will feel more and say more than I should.

**M:** In other words, what do you do if your feelings manage you instead of you managing your feelings?

**C:** Exactly.

**M:** Our emotions can be powerful and overwhelming. You’ve already thought about which emotions you do or don’t feel comfortable expressing at work. It’s probable that the feeling you don’t feel comfortable expressing at work will come out in another instance with someone else, whether it’s with your spouse or with a stranger. One thing that can be helpful is to identify for yourself what your triggers are. Triggers are the things that provoke strong responses in us, sometimes very quickly and unexpectedly.

As we said earlier, having our values disrespected can be a trigger to a strong emotional response, like anger. Can you identify other things that trigger strong negative emotions in you? For instance, someone’s tone of voice could be a trigger for you, or a person cutting you off in traffic can be a trigger.
Knowing what your triggers are can help you be mindful of them and prepare yourself internally. For instance, you can tell yourself: “This is triggering me. I need to take a ten minute break and call my friend,” or “I need to go for a short walk,” or simply “I need to take a few deep breaths before I respond.”

What things help you to deal with your anger or other strong negative reactions?

Our bodies and mental state let us know when we have been triggered and are becoming angry or experiencing some other strong negative reaction. You may be very familiar with your own responses, but not everybody is. This worksheet about anger might help you identify them more specifically. [Marie pulls out a worksheet]

**How Do You Get Angry?**
*Check all that apply or write your own*

**What do you do physically?**
- Raise your voice
- Shake
- Sweat
- Frown
- Scowl
- Get red in the face
- Tighten your chest
- Feel muscle tension
- Get stomach pains
- Get a headache
- Clench your jaw
- Clench your fist

**What are you thinking?**
- I get confused
- I can't concentrate
- I can't remember things
- I fixate on negative things

- I have violent thoughts
- I think about doing harm
- I become irritable

**How are you communicating?**
- I get sarcastic
- I yell
- I swear
- I withdraw

C: Wow, Marie. I didn’t realize how much of a physical response I have when I’m angry. Of course, I don’t ever get violent and throw things [Cedric laughs], but I definitely go through a lot of this.

M: That’s very common. Your body is a very honest communicator. Often it knows what you’re feeling before your conscious mind becomes aware of it. That’s why paying attention to your physical response, as much as your mind and attitude is important to warn you that you’ve been triggered and need to do something about it.

You’ve already mentioned some things that help you when you’re experiencing strong emotions. There are many ways to cope, and what works for some doesn’t work for others. Here are some ideas. You may have others to add to this list:

- Take a walk
- Exercise
- Talk to a trusted friend
- Engage in a completely different activity.
- Write about what’s troubling you and then read it out loud to yourself or to another person.
- Be aware that you have a choice in your response and walk yourself through the possible outcomes

C: Marie, thanks! This has been extremely useful. I think before I talk with Henry it might be a good idea to test the conversation with someone else to see if any triggers come up for me.

M: Good thought! We will definitely do some role playing before your conversation.
STUDY GUIDE 3: Understanding positions, needs, values and emotions

RECAP

• **A position** is the initial demand or want at the start of a negotiation. The experience or threat of conflict can make us cling more firmly to our positions, making it difficult to negotiate.

• **Needs or interests** are the underlying motivations for our positions. We identify them by asking why a person wants what they want. Identifying the needs or interests underlying each of our positions will help us to work out creative solutions that are beneficial for both people.

• **Values** are things we consider important in life. Understanding our values as well as the other person’s values can help us make better sense of why we disagree, and also help us to find common ground with one another. When our values are disrespected, strong emotional responses may be triggered we may experience strong emotional responses.

• **Negative feelings or emotions** are normal, and we need them to alert us when there is a problem. Learning how to express our feelings constructively is the best way to manage them, because feelings always leak when they are bottled up or ignored. It is useful to identify the things that trigger our anger or other strong emotional responses, so we can be prepared when they come up. Our physical responses, as much as our mental and emotional responses, indicate when we have been triggered. Identifying ways to cope with strong emotions can also help us when negative feelings are unexpectedly triggered.

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We Translate Our Feelings Into Judgments
“If you were a good friend you would have been there for me.”

Attributions
“Why were you trying to hurt me?”

Characterizations
“You’re just so inconsiderate.”

Problem-solving
“The answer is for you to call me more often”

Review exercises as a group.

For reflection and discussion:

1. What is it like to reflect on your emotions/feelings in a group setting?
2. What is the value of identifying the specific emotion(s) we are feeling? How might it be helpful? What challenges might it cause?
3. What are you noticing about the way you express/hide emotion in the workplace?
4. How do you tend to “translate your feelings”
Session 4: Preparing Mind, Time and Place for a Negotiation

M: Cedric, now that you’ve identified your own positions, needs, values and feelings about the situation at hand, there are a few other things you can do to get ready for the collaborative negotiation with your supervisor.

1. Switch sides for a moment - Just as you took time to understand your own positions, needs, values and feelings, it is essential to try to understand the other person’s. Since you still haven’t had a dialogue with Henry about what’s bothering you, you probably don’t have enough information to paint the full picture about where he is coming from, but you may have some guesses, based on your past experiences with him and his job responsibilities.

2. Plan the right climate for the conversation – Make sure that you have chosen a good time and place for the conversation. Think: When is my supervisor in the best frame of mind? When am I in the best frame of mind? What meeting space is most conducive to a focused and uninterrupted conversation? When is the best time to ask for a meeting? If, for example, you know that he likes to have a lot of advance notice about a topic to be discussed, make sure that you’re able to give him that. If, on the other hand, he likes to know exactly what is to be discussed immediately without anticipation, make sure that you can ask for the meeting at a time when you would be ready to sit down right away and start the conversation.

3. Identify common ground - Once you’ve developed the best picture you can of what Henry’s positions, needs, values and emotions might be surrounding the difficult situation you want to discuss, you may be able to identify some common ground shared by both of you. Again, you will know more when you hear from him directly, but putting yourself in his shoes will help you in thinking ahead to mutually beneficial solutions.

Remember, no time feels easy to start a difficult conversation. But you can minimize the likelihood of misunderstandings by deliberately choosing an optimal time and place to engage, and by planning ahead about how you will bring up the difficult topic.

C: I think I need to come in early. He usually gets there before anyone, and he seems to be a morning person. So I can ask him if it would be OK to meet one morning before office hours, maybe for coffee.

M: That sounds like a good way to start.

[Cedric and Marie then spend some time identifying his and his supervisor’s possible positions, needs, values and interests, and the common ground between them with the worksheet below.]

Underlying and motivating our positions are needs, interests and values
WORKHEET: Conflict Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>You</th>
<th>Your Supervisor</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Position:</td>
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<td>Interests:</td>
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<td>Emotions:</td>
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<td>Values:</td>
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Common Ground:

STUDY GUIDE 4: Preparing Mind, Time and Place for a Negotiation

RECAP

• Switching sides to see things from the other person’s perspective and to identify their probable positions, needs, values and emotions can help in understanding his/her viewpoint, and also in thinking about how to begin the conversation.

• Identifying the best time and place to have the conversation is important for setting the optimal climate to speak and listen.

• Identifying possible common ground is critical in moving the conversation toward possible solutions.

Review exercises as a group.

For further reflection and discussion:

1. When are you in the best frame of mind to have a difficult conversation?

2. What can you do to create a climate that is conducive to a constructive conversation?

3. What was it like to complete the conflict analysis?

4. In what way does conflict analysis contribute to creating an optimal climate? How does completing the conflict analysis shift the way you feel and think about the situation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>You</th>
<th>Your Supervisor</th>
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<tr>
<td>Position:</td>
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Common Ground:
SESSION 5: Informing and Preparing an Opening Statement

M: We’ve covered a lot of ground to help you get into the right mindset for a collaborative negotiation with your supervisor. Now it’s time to focus on how to enter into dialogue. Are you ready to move from the theory to the practice?

C: I guess it can’t be avoided. [Cedric laughs.] I’m actually very curious to see how all of this comes together.

M: Good. There are two core skills I’d like to discuss with you today: informing and active listening. We’ll be focusing on informing today. Informing means sharing and giving feedback, rather than persuading or arguing. In collaborative negotiation we attempt to negotiate as vigorously for the other person as for ourselves. When negotiating for ourselves it can be helpful to consider whether the impact of our informing statements have the intended effect. In other words, do our statements have a competitive or collaborative effect on the other person?

C: Yes, we often get aggressive in trying to get our point across, because we assume we’ll have to defend it.

M: Right, so here you’re looking to advocate for the both of you. Remember, it’s different from compromise because you don’t want either person to feel that their needs are not being met. I know it may not make sense right away, but thinking of the other person’s needs as much as your own gives you the best chance of getting what you want in the end.

C: OK, let’s give it a shot.

M: Alright! Beginning a difficult conversation is, well, difficult! But setting the right tone at the start of the conversation can maintain the positive climate you created by carefully planning the time and place. How do we begin to tell someone in a position of authority over us, what is bothering us with minimal risk and maximum benefit?

As I said before, successful negotiating is as much about advocating for your needs as it is about advocating for the needs of the person in front of you. The active listening skills we will cover later are essential to accomplishing this. Firstly, however, we need to inform the other person why we’re talking with them and give them effective feedback. Let’s look at one informing model to help you think about how to start the conversation.

[Marie reviews the following constructive feedback suggestions with Cedric.]
agreed that you would provide your part as quickly as possible so I could incorporate it. You gave me your part during the week just before the deadline, and I pushed hard to incorporate the information and complete the report on time. Thankfully, I did submit it just in time.

M: Yeah, I’m glad you were able to get it in.

C: Thanks. What I wanted to share with you was how I experienced us working together on that project. Since you turned your part in so late, I felt like you really left me hanging...

M: Try not to get accusatory. Focus on sharing your actual feeling without blaming her.

C: Right. [Cedric takes a moment to think].

Because I didn’t receive your section until the last week, it was really hard to get everything done on time. The weekend before, I hardly got any sleep and was really worried that I wouldn’t be able to meet the deadline. I felt frustrated because I didn’t have control over when you would submit your part. Maybe I’m wrong, but my interpretation of your attitude towards the project was that you weren’t taking it as seriously. You seemed so relaxed even though you knew the time constraints involved and how important this report was. Since you were not directly accountable to Henry, I felt even more pressure, because everything was going to fall on me if it didn’t get submitted on time. I felt anxious about that, and didn’t understand how you could be so nonchalant about it.

That’s how I interpreted your actions, but I want to check in with you and get your perspective to see if I can better understand how you saw things. How does this all sound to you?

M: OK. Thanks for sharing that, Cedric. Honestly, I didn’t think that my part was so central to the report. I thought it was just going to be supplemental information, and I wish you had said something earlier. I didn’t know that you were so stressed out about it. I could’ve worked harder to help you, but I thought you had things under control. You know that was the week we were completing our work plans too, which took tons of time.

C: Well, since we were both at the initial planning meetings when we got the assignment, I thought you would have felt the same sense of urgency that I did. I must also say I’m someone who likes to have things done not just on time, but ahead of time. I like to have enough time to assure that the quality is good. So, that also heightened my anxiety around waiting.

M: I’m sorry, I didn’t realize it had been so unsettling for you to get my part that late. Really, I wish you had spoken up sooner. I know you sent
Separate the “person” from the “problem” whenever possible. The issue was not Olivia herself, it was the problem of coordinating your work with one another. How to do that well becomes the focus in the conversation, nothing personal about her and no assumptions about her intentions.

Consider tone of voice, volume, body language and timing. In other words, how you say things – verbally and non-verbally – and when to say things.

How does all of that sound?

C: Sounds good. This is starting to make more sense.

M: You did well. OK, see you next time!

Now, along with Cedric, spend some time composing an opening statement for a collaborative negotiation of your own.

A crucial part of giving good feedback is to distinguish between the facts and our assumptions.

So, now, before we meet next time it would be helpful if you can try to construct an opening statement for your supervisor using this model and bearing in mind other things we have talked about so far. We will practice it when you come back. Your opening is important because it will really set the tone for the dialogue. As you’re composing, keep these things in mind:

- **Acknowledge and appreciate** his willingness to make time for the conversation.

- **Highlight the common ground/interests** you share.

- **Align the intent and impact** – do your statements have a collaborative or competitive impact on the other person?

- **Be willing to stop and actively listen** if you are interrupted before you get through your opening statements.

- **Focus on sharing** your own values, positions, needs and feelings.

- **Use “I” and “We” statements** vs. “You” statements. For example, you did this when you switched from saying “I felt like you left me hanging” to “I felt frustrated because I didn’t have control over your part.”
STUDY GUIDE 5: Informing and Preparing the Opening Statement

RECAP

- The two main components of dialogue are informing and active listening.
- The constructive feedback model is one way to begin the informing process, and helps separate the facts from our interpretation of them.

Review exercises as a group

For further reflection and discussion

1. How do you understand the logic of the constructive feedback model? What might happen if certain steps are omitted?

EXERCISE: Opening Statement Roleplay

- Divide into pairs. Be prepared to share the first draft of your opening statement.
- One person will deliver their opening statement, focusing on the first three steps of the constructive feedback model. (Describe-Express-Request) The other person will roleplay as the colleague or supervisor. Their role will be to listen and provide feedback to their partner. (5 min.)

- Switch roles and repeat.
- Reconvene and debrief as a group.
SESSION 6: The Opening Statement and Active Listening

C: I put a lot of thought into my opening statement. It was much harder than I thought.

M: Good! Let’s role play, and remember to address me as if I were your supervisor.

C: [Cedric composes himself and begins] Henry, first of all, I wanted to say thank you for taking the time to have this conversation. I know how busy you are, so thank you for making time this morning.

M: It’s fine. What do you want to talk about?

C: There are some aspects of the work environment that I have been meaning to discuss with you. My hope is that by doing so I might be able to gain more clarity.

M: Like what? [Marie imitates a gruff and short tone of voice]

C: As you know, during the flooding emergency, our team was extremely busy. We all worked overtime, sometimes not leaving the office until nine or ten o’clock to ensure that we addressed all the unexpected but crucial issues that came up every day. We made it through that hectic time and I think we all felt very proud of the way we contributed to the organization’s response to the crisis. During this time, I was called on to help the temporary chief on a regular basis, because he was unfamiliar with the country and our local systems. My job suddenly entailed a lot more responsibility and decision-making as a result, along with the long hours. I felt a lot of pressure, but I understood that it was an unusual situation, and we were all required to give more than usual.

When the emergency had passed, I expected the workload to normalize again. We were all looking forward to returning to a more manageable pace and the usual hours. However, that never happened, and it seems that many of us are still consistently working long hours.

You seem to have great ambitions for our team and you want to push us to do our best. This work matters a lot to me as well, and I want to support these new initiatives. At the same time, I feel exhausted and not as efficient at work as I used to be because I have had no chance to recover from the stresses of the past several months. I also have a family that I care a lot about, and I feel like I have not been available for them since the emergency began.
So, let’s get into more detail about active listening skills, which will be invaluable as you continue your conversation. No doubt, Henry will have some feedback for you, too, and maybe he will feel a need to explain his behaviour. Your ability to listen and to understand him will make a difference in how open he is to engage in problem-solving with you.

Active Listening skills are useful throughout the process of informing. After your opening, whenever possible, listen first, demonstrate that you have heard, and then inform again. There are three main parts to active listening. Take a look at this diagram:

-focused listening is being able to identify the values, positions, needs and feelings of the other side in a conflict and using body language to demonstrate that you’re listening.

Cedric, what do you think we mean by body language that demonstrates listening?

C: I guess what we are doing right now. We are facing each other, making eye contact, leaning a little bit forward, looking like we are paying attention.

M: That’s right. In fact, if you are actually paying attention, this body language will come naturally. If we are preoccupied with our own emotions, or with what we will say next, or crafting an argument in reply, we will not be able to listen fully. If the chatter inside your mind is getting in the way of you paying full attention, getting your body into a listening position can also help your mind to follow.

Speaking of body language, how else can it be helpful in negotiation?

C: Well, another person’s body language tells us what state they are in. So I’ll also know if Henry is listening and open to what I’m saying based on his body language. If he is crossing his arms and looking away, checking his messages, looking at the door a lot like he’s waiting for an interruption, I will know he’s not really open to listening.
Examples of open-ended questions are: “Could you tell me a bit more about…?”, or “I’d like to understand more clearly what you mean to say,” or “share more with me how this situation has been affecting you…”

At this stage of the conversation, you’re still not digging for solutions, but you’re really listening to understand the other person’s viewpoint, and to help him feel heard and recognized, which will – again – encourage a collaborative dynamic.

[Marie then turns to Cedric and asks him to convert the following closed-ended questions into open-ended questions.]

Is the project going well?

Did you like the outreach event?

Is it possible that you’re taking staff for granted?

Did you realize that everyone is stressed out?

Can we go back to the way things were?
STUDY GUIDE 6: The Opening Statement and Active Listening

RECAP

• Drafting and practicing an **opening statement** for your collaborative negotiation is a helpful centering tool that will help you practice and clarify your language and intention in the negotiation.

• **Active listening** is a key skill in dialogue. It’s composed of three main parts:

  a) **Focused listening** means that we are paying close attention to the positions, values, needs and feelings the other person is expressing, and we are letting them know we hear them through our body language.

  b) **Paraphrasing** is what we do to show the other person that we understand what they’re saying. To paraphrase, we reflect their statements back to them, and identify their needs and feelings.

  c) **Probing** is asking open-ended questions to encourage the other person to share more of their perspective and hopefully set a more collaborative tone.

Review exercises as a group.

**EXERCISE: Active Listening Role-play**

• Divide into pairs.
• One person will deliver their opening statement. The other person will role-play as the colleague or supervisor and respond to the opening statement. The person delivering the opening statement should focus on the use of active listening skills. (10 min.)
• Exchange feedback and switch roles.
• Re convene and debrief as a group.

For further reflection and discussion

1. Many of us find it challenging to ask open-ended questions? Why might that be?

2. What is the value of using open-ended questions in a collaborative negotiation?

3. What did you notice about the effect of active listening on the conversation in role-play?
SESSION 7: Reframing

M: How has your week been going, Cedric?
C: Much better. I realize, actually, that I’ve already been putting to use some of the techniques that we talked about, and I’m already feeling better about my interactions with my supervisor, even though we haven’t had THE conversation yet.
M: That’s great to hear. Are you using these techniques with any others?
C: A bit with other colleagues, too, but I have to admit, I haven’t gotten around to practicing with my own family.
M: Sometimes it’s hardest with the people we’re closest to!
M: Today we’re going to talk about reframing. As we said before, often people try to negotiate at the level of positions and with a win/lose frame. Reframing the negotiation consists of moving the conversation from the level of positions to the level of needs. In another words, it’s a way to help us shift to a win/win orientation. An effective way of doing this is asking ourselves what the problem is really about or restating the issue as a mutual problem-solving process where both sides agree to jointly search for a solution that meets both side’s needs. You did this when we role played the opening statement with Henry. You framed it as a joint problem to be solved.

This diagram could be useful for understanding reframing:

Reframing the negotiation consists of moving the conversation from the level of positions to the level of needs.
Reframe:

SCENARIO 3

Co-worker 1: I think we’re just too different to work together. I try to be a good listener and respectful of everyone’s ideas, but he never stops to listen. He has very clear opinions about how we should run the committee meetings, and practically barks them at us like we all must agree. Actually, if that’s how he plans to be during the committee meetings, I want no part of them.

Co-worker 2: He’s slowing down our progress. He’s always stopping to check in with everyone and he questions every detail. It seems like no work plan is good enough. The problem with this office is people over-think everything. We need action. The committee should have started its work a month ago. We’ve spent too much time planning and not enough doing.

Reframe:

We both value a positive work environment. Is there a way to meet my need for punctuality and your need for maintaining a comfortable and relaxed workplace?

SCENARIO 2

Supervisee: Whenever we get invited to public outreach events, I’m always the one who’s asked to go, but they take a lot of time, and they aren’t part of my work plan. Last time my supervisor came to my office to tell me about the latest event as if it had already been decided that I would go. Work is light right now, I know, but the truth is I don’t like being the only person who is asked to go. Others have time, too, and know the same information I do. I wonder if I’m always asked because I’m the most agreeable person in the office.

Supervisor: She’s usually willing to go these outreach events, and it’s a tremendous help to the office, because it gives us steady positive exposure in the community. I ask her to go, because she is very good with the public. But this time she seemed to have a negative attitude when I asked her. I know she doesn’t have much on her calendar this month, so I don’t understand what the problem is.

Reframe:

Can you think of another situation at work that could be reframed?
STUDY GUIDE 7: Reframing

RECAP

• Reframing is a technique to turn the conflict into a joint problem-solving process.

• It starts with identifying the needs underlying the positions of each person, and then asking how we can meet both person’s needs.

• We also identify common goals when we reframe, and ask how we can uphold those while trying to meet our individual needs.

Review exercises as a group.

For reflection and discussion

1. What is the value of reframeing?

2. What is needed in order to reframe effectively?

3. At what point in a negotiation might a reframe be most impactful?

4. How can you use reframeing in your own upcoming conversation?

M: Well done, Cedric! Now how can you integrate reframeing into your upcoming conversation?

C: Well, some of the reframeing I’ll do will probably sound like: How can we meet your need for adequate staff support and my need to strike a balance between work and home? And how can we meet your need to achieve certain goals by the end of the quarter, and my need to recover from the intensity of the past several months? How can we meet our common goal of making our team the best team it can be? And our mutual goal of making our office a comfortable work environment that we all look forward to coming to, and want to do our best in? Something like that.

M: That’s the idea! Of course, these reframe will come in throughout your conversation as you identify his needs and as you paraphrase to show him that you have heard the things that are important to him. Once the various needs and common ground are clearly established, the conversation usually moves very naturally onto some creative brainstorming and narrowing down action steps. We’ll get into action-planning next time.
SESSION 8: Agreements and Follow-Through

M: OK, Cedric, it’s been a long process, but I think we nearing the end of our work together.

C: Yes, I feel the same way. You’ve been incredibly generous with your time and I’m very, very grateful. I feel so much more equipped to negotiate my needs with Henry. You’ve gone above and beyond for me, Marie.

M: I’m happy to be of service to a dear colleague such as yourself. I know how difficult it is to have these conversations. I work with clients almost every day in this way and every situation is challenging in its own way. You approached this work with the tenacity that it requires and I have confidence you’ll do well. So, are you ready for the last steps?

C: Most definitely!

M: Great. So, let’s talk about the final piece, agreements and follow-through. As we said before, once you feel you’ve been able to hear and understand each other, you can begin brainstorming solutions. You can transition into that by saying, for instance, “would it be alright with you if we brainstormed some possible actions we could take - just put out as many ideas as we can think of and examine them to see what would be best?” Or if that feels too much like you are leading the conversation, and his sense of authority could be threatened, you might be more careful: “Do you have any suggestions as to how we can address these issues? I would be happy to offer whatever comes to mind also.”

C: That sounds good. I could see myself phrasing things that way.

M: Good. Now, reaching an agreement in a collaborative negotiation can be exciting. However, agreements are often fragile and require follow-through to ensure that they don’t unravel. There are three types of tools that can help with this step.

Firstly, written agreements. In some cases, it may be useful to write down and sign the agreements to avoid misunderstandings later.

C: Hmmm, sounds too formal for my case.

M: That may be the case. At least for this beginning conversation, to suggest something written may actually elicit some defensiveness. Another option is to ask for some support mechanisms like follow-up meetings to review progress, sharing agreements with a third party, or getting help for implementation from others.

C: A follow-up meeting seems like the right thing to do in this situation.
RECAP

• In brainstorming creative solutions, the participation of both parties is important. Active listening is as important at this stage of the conversation as it is at any other.

• There are various options to assure follow-through in agreements.
  
  a) Written agreements.
  
  b) Supportive mechanisms like check-in meetings or third party helpers, and setting timelines for the agreement points and follow-up.
  
  c) Discussing the possible blocks and reality-testing the agreement together with the other person is also important to make sure we’re not setting ourselves up for failure.

Review the exercises as a group.

For further reflection and discussion

1. What helps make a brainstorming session productive?
2. Why do agreements tend to be “fragile”?

EXERCISE: Collaborative Negotiation Role-play

• Divide into pairs.

• Take turns role-playing an entire negotiation, incorporating all the skills you have learned and practiced up to this point. (10 minutes for preparation; 20 minutes for the role-play.)

• Switch roles.

• Reconvene and debrief as a group.
The Negotiation Flow Diagram

Preparing for a Discussion/Negotiation
Understand your position, need, values and emotions surrounding the issue
Think of the other persons position, needs, values and emotions
Identify potential common ground
and consider what would happen if you don’t address the issue
Choose an appropriate time and place for the negotiation to take place

Opening Statement & Active Listening
Describe your observations/the facts in neutral terms
Express your interpretation of what happened and of the impact it had
Request their perspective
Paraphasing, Probing & Open-ended questions

Reframing
Highlight common ground
Separate the person from the problem
Focus on sharing each other’s positions, needs, values and feelings
Remember to use “We” statements

Brainstorm & Agree on a Solution
Invite the other person to give their ideas
before offering your own suggestions
Explore what might change
Agree on a solution that fits both people

Agree on Action & Follow-Through
Verbally agree on what action is needed/Written agreements
Plan a follow-up meeting
Brainstorm on possible obstacles/challenges that could get in the way
Share your plan with a third party as relevant
SESSION 9: Closing Thoughts

[Cedric returns one week later to tell Marie about the conversation with his supervisor.]

M: Welcome back, Cedric! I’m looking forward to hearing how things went for you. You look pleased…and surprised!

C: I am! I thought this would be so much more difficult, but I really tried to use all the skills we talked about, and it went well. In fact, as soon as I asked for his input, he actually apologized for not being more aware of how hard he had been pushing us without a break! He said he didn’t realize what a toll it was taking, and that his focus on the challenges of a new position may have overshadowed other things.

M: So he informed you, too.

C: Yes, and you know the shift in body language played out just like we discussed. At first, he seemed worried, and he did have his arms crossed. He was leaning back in his chair and he had a very serious look on his face. It was a bit intimidating at first, but as I started sharing the impact the workload has had my family, his attitude changed. He leaned forward and really seemed to be listening. We didn’t agree on all priorities for the office, but I definitely think he heard me, and I felt he respected me for coming to him. In fact, he even confessed that he missed his own family a great deal and that maybe he was coping with that by pouring himself into work.

M: That’s useful information. He has a family, too, and can relate to your need.

C: Yes, I even invited him to visit us at home sometime so he can get away from the office now and then.

M: It sounds like that went really well. What steps did you agree to take?

C: We actually decided to have a staff retreat to discuss the work of the office openly and how we might alleviate the pressure. He offered to re-delegate some tasks and we decided to meet in 3 weeks and see if things have normalized, or if we need to adjust the plan. He was disappointed that I didn’t speak with him sooner and asked me to be more direct in the future, which I thought was a very fair request…Marie, I couldn’t have done this without your help. You told me in our first session that there was probably an opportunity for growth hidden in this situation. You were so right. I would have missed it without this process and your support…thank you.

M: I’m proud of you, Cedric. You did the work, and clearly it has paid off!

C: It certainly has. I actually have to run because I have a date with my wife…We’re going dancing!
LETTER FROM THE STAFF WELL-BEING UNIT

Dear Colleagues,

We hope you have enjoyed Cedric’s Story and now feel more equipped to engage in similarly collaborative ways in your workplace. It is clear that every situation is unique and requires different resolutions. Needless to say, some negotiations may be much more challenging than the one Cedric had with his supervisor.

What we would like to emphasize though is the value of the process that Cedric undertook in preparation for his negotiation. We hope that it is clear that the attitudes, skills and principles of collaborative negotiation can be applied at any point, not only when conflict seems imminent or a difficult situation has affected our performance and well-being.

Creating a work environment that is conducive to staff well-being requires a special effort on the part of managers. It also requires efforts from each staff member to be aware of what he or she needs to thrive and perform at their best and to negotiate these needs in the spirit of collaboration. If the needs of staff are not clearly expressed, it will be difficult to support them.

We encourage you to continue this conversation with your colleagues and to take advantage of opportunities to apply the lessons of Cedric’s Story in your own professional life.

We wish you all the best and look forward to accompanying you in the process.

Best regards,

Staff Well-Being Unit, UNICEF NYHQ

REFERENCES


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